



***What are the issues and opportunities facing us as we attempt to evaluate the impact of Proposition 10 in our communities?***

## County Evaluators Working with County Children and Families Commissions

Working Group Notes  
February 21, 2001  
Double Tree Hotel, Sacramento

Sponsored by:  
California Children and Families Commission  
California Children and Families Association  
Foundation Consortium





The goal of this one-day conference was to bring county commissions and evaluators together to begin discussions about research and evaluation that overlap across counties. In addition, this meeting was for county commissions and evaluators to have a forum to raise issues, concerns, and challenges we are collectively confronting as we set out to evaluate the impact of Prop 10 in our communities, counties and the State of California.

The process used for the meeting was "Open Space Technology." Open Space Technology has been in continuous development since 1985 and it has been used all over the world with groups of 5 to 1000 people. Open Space meetings are characterized by self-organization and high degrees of freedom for participants. It is based in the belief that organizations and communities run on passion and responsibility. In an Open Space environment a natural communication process is created that recognizes that people take responsibility to pursue what has meaning for them and to see that something gets done. We chose this process because the format works in bringing people together to network, meet each other and learn. Also, it ensures that what is important to each participant will be discussed.

At this event, our theme was: ***What are the issues & opportunities facing us as we attempt to evaluate the impact of Proposition 10 in our communities?*** Participants identified 13 topics, related to this theme, that were discussed during one-hour sessions for the remainder of the day. The pages that follow are the notes taken during these sessions. We hope these notes will remind you of the day's event, the people we met, the experiences we shared, and prepare us for what is still ahead.



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## How can we use results-based evaluation to link Prop 10 with other county agencies that serve children and families?

### **Convener:**

*David Gray*

[dgray99@pacbell.net](mailto:dgray99@pacbell.net)

530.887.0907

### **Participants:**

*Pat Wheatley*

*Kim Puckett*

*Nancy B.*

*Sid Gardner*

*Barbara Dubransky*

*Alyce Mastrianni*

*Lani Schiff-Roo*

*Michelle S.*

### **Issues:**

- If Prop 10 results accountability is more difficult than county accountability requirements, it may set up separation between Prop 10 and other county agencies.
- What legislation exists to promote cross-agency collaboration?
- More clearly define Prop 10 as “flexible funds” to bring other categorical funds together.
- How to balance costs in one agency with savings in another.
- Common outcomes across partners – similar or same format.
- Common intake and universal case management plan.
- Use funding to drive coordinated services and strengthen non-profits.
- What about gaps between program results and county baseline benchmarks?
- Improve baseline data to support Prop 10 strategies.

- How could we increase county flexibility and ability to influence state agencies?
- Could CSAC partner with some counties to demonstrate the importance of system change?
- Can Prop 10 at the state level influence other state agencies to...revisit state and federal legislation that could support collaboration, blending funds, etc. across state and county departments and other “entities” created by county ordinances?
- Use report cards to grade state agency support of Prop 10.
- System change strategies – CFC advocate for local government change.
- Bring along all county agencies into results-based accountability.
- Focus on a strategic set of results across agencies – avoid multiple standards and “easy versus hard” approaches that drive agencies away from Prop 10 results-based approaches.

### Action/Next Steps/Recommendations

Encourage the state commission and the ccafa legislative committee to advocate for and educate the state legislature regarding state and federal legislation that could support collaboration, blended funds, and other systems change strategies across state and county departments and among other “entities” created by county ordinance.

## How do we bring together indicator data to build overall statements about program success?

### **Convener:**

*Mark Duerr*

[mduerr@duerrevaluation.com](mailto:mduerr@duerrevaluation.com)

530 893 3734

### **Issues:**

Discussed the various levels of data that might be collected.

1. Program-level indicators: qualitative and quantitative. Did this program have an impact?
2. Client-level indicators; collecting data for individual client families across programs.
3. Indicator-level data: indicators not specific to any one program, immunizations, and child abuse calls, etc.

The key question was, can these various measures be combined some how to answer the overall questions of interest such as was school readiness improved? What are the overall questions? We did not decide.

Noted that the overall questions for the state may be different than those of interest to the individual counties. We learned that there is a subcommittee working with SRI and state to address these issues. Received a progress report on this effort.

Acknowledged that the overall questions, such as are youth school ready, may be extremely difficult to measure with a single measure, and that that measure may or may not already exist. Noted that the Department of Mental Health does the EMHI program that serves Kindergartners and they have data on the “school readiness” of tens of thousands of kindergarten students in the state.

## School Readiness

### Convener:

*Pablo A. Stansbery*

Harder & Company Community Research (San Joaquin, Santa Clara).

[Ps@post.harvard.edu](mailto:Ps@post.harvard.edu)

415.522.5400

### Participants:

*Sid Gardner (Orange, +)*

*Gloria Bryngelson (SD)*

*Judith G. Calvo (Madera)*

*Teresa Nuno (LAC)*

*Amanda G-Perez (LACity)*

*Jenifer Billman (San Benito)*

*Marni Roosevelt (LAC)*

*Barbara Pressman (LAC)*

*John Siegel (Trinity)*

*Paul Crissey (Solano)*

*Alesha Andrews (Orange & Contra Costa)*

*Frieda du Toig (ABS)*

*Sean Casey (Contra Costa)*

*Casey Morrigan (Sonoma)*

*Meredith Mathias (Madera)*

### Issues:

1) Definitions of school readiness. Jane Henderson suggested one diagram used as a starting point to define school readiness within several domains.

	Child	Parent	School	Community	Society
Physical					
Social					
Cognitive					
Emotional					
(Spiritual)					



Different cultural groups may have different expectations and child rearing practices, which influence developmental trajectories and the acquisition of particularly skills/capacities.

Beyond culture there are differences of income and education.

*Three places to start to look at school readiness include:*

- a) Desired Results> CA. Dept of Education website has information on developmental milestones for child development and “school readiness”.
- b) Preschool Guidelines
- c) Headstart Outcomes

*Potential outcomes to measure school readiness include:*

- a.) Nutrition levels
- b.) Awareness of health care options
- c.) Immunizations
- d.) No. of times parent reads to child each week
- e.) Maternal/paternal education levels
- f.) Parent literacy rates
- g.) Height/weight of child

*Other lingering question(s):*

- 1) Should school readiness be the focus of child/human development? School represents a small proportion of a child's life.
- 2) How to work between cultural sensitivities (relativism) and institutional (universal) expectations.

### Action/Next Steps/Recommendations

- We will develop a distribution list and/or bulletin board to continue discussion and definition of school readiness.

## Addressing Issues Related to Confidentiality and Data Sharing

### **Convener:**

*Alyce Mastrianni, Orange*  
[alyce.mastrianni@ocgov.com](mailto:alyce.mastrianni@ocgov.com),  
(714) 834-3916

### **Participants:**

*Alesha Andrews, Corporation for Standards & Outcomes (Orange)*  
*Sheila Kruse, Tuolumne*  
*Lani Schiff Ross, San Joaquin*  
*Dale Moscrop, Sacramento*  
*Randy Thomas, Lake*

### **Issues:**

- Politics/Attitudes
- Lack of focus on the benefits and outcomes of shared data
- Lack of understanding of statutes and regulations (including HIPAA)
- Concerns related to sharing HIV/Mental Health/Substance Abuse/Court Related records/information
- Lack of understanding of the types of information that can/cannot be shared
- Lack of established legal protocols and informed consent related to Children and Families Commission work
- Issue takes a focus effort, desire, and time to move this issue forward
- Difficulties working through the issue to reach understanding with multiple agencies
- Lack of specific, simple-to-understand statute to allow sharing
- Lack of local expertise (even with County or Commission counsel) for this issue
- Issues related to immigration concerns
- Concerns of who will use data and how data will be used (IRS, Marketing, Custody)

## Opportunities:

- Data-sharing allows unduplicated count/description of the clients we serve
- A variety of providers, agencies work with the same families and desire better integration and improvement of services.
- Central Client Record allows better understanding of dosage of services
- Ability to collect core data elements across grantees and strategies to document results
- Allow providers to focus on what they do well and ensure the referrals made to other services are made (tracking of referrals)
- Better evaluation of strategy result from the ability to look at all services the client receives.
- The impact on the client is less invasive over time – the client provides information only once and does not have to provide the same information again for the next service.
- Evaluators have access to data for required outcome measurement and evaluation
- Break down service silos
- Provides a better picture of the family to provide essential services earlier in a preventive manner.

## Action/Next Steps/Recommendations

- Identify data/indicator standards
- Inventory and assess related statutes/regulations that have impact on Commissions.
- Sponsor specific Health and Safety Code citation
- Develop an engagement process to form statewide partnerships to move forward on this issue and provide cross-training of providers.
- Develop sample tools; protocols, MOUs, contract language, informed consent, family pamphlet
- Develop mechanism to share among Commissions information related to what is working in this area
- Develop and provide training;
  - to address issues (myths)
  - ensure that all providers understand client rights and can communicate this to clients
  - Train-the-trainers for local Commissions

## Data Collection

### Convener:

*Carmen T. Mendoza*  
ctmendoza@visto.com  
(559) 241-6514

### Issues:

1. Standardized definitions
  - a. Indicators
    - Process indicators
    - Impact indicators
    - Outcome indicators
  - b. Data type
    - Quantitative
    - Qualitative
2. County-driven process for deciding what levels data can be broken down to.
3. Mechanisms to account for duplication of services (Prop 10 funds vs. others, families served by multiple programs, etc.)
4. Baseline data: existing data and first-time baseline data
5. Best practices at program level and relevance to baseline data
6. County capacity vs. service provision
7. Data duplication
8. Confidentiality issues
9. Data sharing
10. Data integrity
11. Instrument validity and reliability

### Opportunities:

1. Identifying unintended effects
2. Collecting first-time baseline data
3. Standardized requests to programs
  - Demographic data: what of the following is acceptable to request? What is interesting? To what level do we want these data broken down?
    - Age
    - Gender
    - Race/ethnicity
    - Address/zip code

4. Counties providing backbone data to State

5. Data that's easy to collect:

Who we're funding

Funding areas/services

Target populations

### Action/Next Steps/Recommendations

- Process for counties to share evaluation formats and requirements
- State reporting requests

## Neighborhood Level Data

### Convener:

*Richard Pan*

[r.pan@ucdmc.ucdavis.edu](mailto:r.pan@ucdmc.ucdavis.edu)

916-734-1518

### Participants:

<b>Name</b>	<b>County</b>
<i>Melissa Knight</i>	<i>Sacramento</i>
<i>Kim Puckett</i>	<i>Madera</i>
<i>Charlette Lauppe</i>	<i>Colusa</i>
<i>Fred Balcom</i>	<i>Yolo</i>
<i>Randy Thomas</i>	<i>Lake</i>
<i>Lin Balter</i>	<i>Sacramento</i>
<i>Dale Moscrop</i>	<i>Sacramento</i>
<i>Barbara Avel</i>	<i>TA Center</i>
<i>Elias Lopez</i>	<i>State Commission</i>
<i>Trufat Abelbe</i>	<i>L.A.</i>
<i>Katie Fullin</i>	<i>L.A.</i>
<i>Barbara Dubrausky</i>	<i>L.A.</i>
<i>Angel Roberson</i>	<i>L.A.</i>

### Issues:

- Measuring indicators relevant to particular communities
- How to define a neighborhood
- Linking evaluation efforts across neighborhoods
- Finding indicators of community well-being
- Measuring social isolation
- Performing qualitative evaluation
- Conducting longitudinal follow-up
- Communities not always geographic, may be by ethnicity, religious affiliation, etc.

### Opportunities:

- Data on neighborhoods from schools, police, HUD, redevelopment agencies.
- Use of GIS software to analyze and present data
- Gets buy-in from neighborhoods.

### Action/Next Steps/Recommendations:

- Create a clearinghouse to share information/best practices on neighborhood data.
- Create methods (Internet, conference calls) to share experiences between counties.
- Communicate with police, HUD, schools, and redevelopment agencies to define neighborhoods and obtain data.
- Obtain GIS software – state Commission could license for all counties and/or find county agencies already using GIS.
- Identify technical support/software for performing qualitative evaluation.

## Soliciting and Ensuring Full Community Buy-in and Investment

### **Convener:**

*Melissa Knight-Barfield*

*Knight Barfield Associates*

*Subcontractor of Evalustats Consulting*

*559-307-6287; [profmkb@aol.com](mailto:profmkb@aol.com)*

*Representing Madera County*

### **Participants:**

*Cindy Keltner, Technical Assistance Service Center*

*Amanda Guzman-Perez, L.A. County*

*Carolyn Wylie, Riverside County*

*Meredith Mathias, Madera County*

*Francesca Wright, Foundation Consortium*

*Teresa Nuno, L.A. County*

*Jane Adams, San Bernadino County*

*Pamela Taylor, L.A. County*

*Michele Schiro, Nevada County*

### **Issues:**

1. Different populations within the community
2. Transportation
3. Language and culture
4. Communication with lay terms
  - Taking planning into the community: (a) What do we want for kids?
  - (b) Have we asked parents?
5. How to link community thinking and agency thinking at multiple levels
6. Burden/Resource Issues – Lack of resources within grantee agencies and the burden to build community capacity
7. Addressing the need for ongoing community outreach
  - How do we foster trust?
8. Who is the 'community'?
  - Parents
  - Grandparents (inc. g/p raising kids)
  - The Four Sectors
  - Private Sector - Businesses
  - Government Sector – all levels
  - Nonprofit Sector – 501(c)(3)
  - Community at Large



- Faith-based groups
- Neighborhood groups
- Associations
- Cultural Groups
- Civic Groups
- Informal Networks (esp. inclusive of immigrant populations)
- Education System at all levels – colleges, universities, trade schools

#### Macro View

- Combination of strategic planning and the overall evaluation process
- Community sectors to understand what key results are/mean

#### Micro View

- Identify what's important to measure and how to measure that, community by community and agency by agency
- Lay language for each sector for involvement and investment – i.e., use language that is important to each of the different stakeholder groups. Language they will identify with, relate to and buy into.

### Opportunities:

- Identifying Ways of Fostering Trust Within and Throughout Communities
- Finding individuals who can engender trust for/within multiple and/or specific community segments
- Identify 'natural' family resource centers within communities
- Never undermine/underestimate community capacity to understand
- Feedback loop to communication
- Build staff capacity in diversity and cultural competency
- Consistency
- Go to the community
- Hire from within the community

### Action/Next Steps/Recommendations

#### County Level –

1. Explicit commissioner commitment to listen to the community
2. Engagement of community in planning process (i.e. what we're measuring, defined in lay terms by the community and reported back to the community)
3. Recognizing that the community-defined measurements may be outside of the box

#### State Level –

1. Ongoing commitment of learning by sharing wealth of information gleaned by the state
2. Through the county reports at all levels -- intra/inter county exchange
3. State Commission needs to be flexible for each county in terms of what is being evaluated (the apple cart may have/should have different kinds of apples)

## How can state agencies provide better, faster data for Prop 10 countywide baselines?

### Convener:

*Sid Gardner*

sgardner@fullerton.edu

714 278-2166

### Issues:

1. Efficiency of data collection means the state is an important part of the data system
2. Assembling all the pieces collected at the county level is challenging enough; dealing with the state is still more difficult; lost of data starts out at the county and gets sent to the state but doesn't return for two years or more
3. Challenge is selecting the core indicators for which P10 commission needs baselines and then assessing the quality of the data
4. 3 categories of data exist: we have it; we have it in the system and could get it new; we don't have it at all [Now, New, No]

Specific Indicators the Group was interested in:

- Healthy Families enrollment 0-5
- Breastfeeding-length of time [now collect @ hospital only]
- Child poverty—need better data than 96-97 census
- Child care setting—update. Deepen C Care Portfolios
- Ch care worker pay and retention
- Percent of women eligible for/participating in CPSP [Comprehensive Perinatal Services Providers]
- Prenatal substance exposure—AB 2669 widely ignored; need for better data @ hospital level and at county CPS level; CWS-CMS system is “hopeless” and needs to be replaced at co level with separate system on 0-5 kids affected by child abuse and neglect.

### Opportunities:

1. State Commission doing new household survey—great chance to affect what data they collect that fits baselines priorities
2. If counties shared priorities across core indicators—the agenda for “data advocacy” with the state would be greatly enhanced

## **Collaboration not equal to System Change (not all collaborations are equal)**

### Issues:

Systems change should lead to improved outcomes.

Some very early attempts at defining positive systems change outcomes are available, but most counties not doing so

Data being collected?

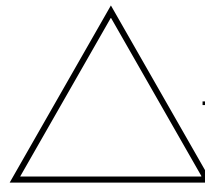
How do you measure qualitative change?

To whom do you listen?

Civic engagement

Providers

Families



Triangulate

True change may have to include “humble measures”

The goal is not better jargon.

### Action/Next Steps/Recommendations

- Involve wide range of stakeholders
- Joint planning/accountability
- “Projectitis” and pilot programs are anti-systems change
- Empower new entities
- Collaboration
- Accountability
- Agreed upon outcomes
- Family satisfaction
- Systems change occurs on many levels- Prop 10 addresses system change where there is no clearly establish system

## Evaluating Ourselves

### **Convener:**

*Nicole Humphrey*  
nhumphrey@prop10.org  
Los Angeles County – Prop 10

### **Participants:**

*Alameda*  
*Los Angeles*  
*Santa Barbara*  
*State Prop 10*

### **Issues:**

1) What is the role of the Commission and how do we evaluate each role that we play

- **ADVOCATE**

- What do we want to achieve as an advocate?
- Capacity building as an advocacy function:
  - working with cities and community groups to bring projects to life (creating the structure for these groups to work together)
  - Finding new ways of doing things

- **GRANTMAKER**

- How well did we help agencies achieve success?
- Did grants awarded match the need? Did we fund the right things, the right people and give funding to the right places?

- **SYSTEMS CHANGER**

- Is the system smaller because people are no longer in it?
- How have we used our money to influence the system to change?
- How have systems worked together to integrate data systems and other information?
- Has the system changed where it is spending its' money? Where are we serving clients? Is more money going to prevention services versus intervention services?
- Where were we a catalyst for change?

- 2) Who should do the evaluation?
  - ❑ Self-evaluation versus using an outside person
  - ❑ Our approach to grantmaking determines how we will evaluate ourselves.
- 3) How do we know we are doing what we are supposed to be doing?
- 4) How is Prop 10 changing the lives of children and families?
- 5) Do we know enough about what is already out there?
- 6) How do we fit in the existing funding streams?

### Opportunities

- ❑ Develop a language of **contribution** instead of attribution
  - acknowledge the limitation of our funding
  - Easier to measure
- ❑ Give Commission information needed to make good decisions
  - start with the Strategic plan
  - Justify what was funded
  - Reflect back on what we were trying to change in the first place

### Recommendations

- ❑ Collective evaluation of county efforts
- ❑ Evaluate each other
- ❑ Develop common outcomes across counties as well as use individual county outcomes
  - Convene workshops/symposiums to share information, best practices, issues, etc.
- ❑ State Prop 10 role
  - Public opinion poll
  - Longitudinal study
  - Technical assistance and support
  - Networking and information sharing
  - Facilitator

**FINAL THOUGHT: *IT'S ALL ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE KIDS***

**How to build community capacity around evaluation?  
How to take this word “evaluation” so that all  
individuals and grass root organizations understand the  
language; barriers to program-level evaluation**

**Convener:**

*Dennis Haines*

[dhaines@mcoe.merced.k12.ca.us](mailto:dhaines@mcoe.merced.k12.ca.us)

*Merced County*

**Participants:**

*Madera County*

*Stanislaus*

*San Joaquin*

*Sacramento*

*Los Angeles County*

**Issues:**

The Language:

1. Plain English or whatever
  2. Different Cultures
    - a. Professional
    - b. Agency
- 
- Commission buy –in that evaluation is important.
  - Communicating the importance and value to the agencies and individuals
  - Barrier with agencies and organizations not having computer/technology or the in-house capacity to use that technology
  - Agencies and organizations needing additional support with planning and designing their program.
  - Understanding what agency and organizations objectives and goals
  - What is realistic? What can we really measure?
  - Using the words impact, results, outcome, indicators, performance measures, how do we all agree to the same understanding for all levels.
  - The word accountability is threatening; how do we balance the need for accountability with the desire to improve programs through evaluation & organizational learning?
  - There is the issue of causality and longevity; are outcomes realistic? Can they be achieved within 3 years (or funding limit)? Just because outcome

improved, does not necessarily mean it can be attributed to the program or to Prop 10. Need to consider other confounding variables/context variables

- Learning to move from number counting to effect.
- Agencies consider evaluator's job is to evaluate not our job to evaluate.
- How do we keep RBA and evaluation in general from being top-down? RBA (Friedman's model) is academic and not meaningful/accessible to community-based and grassroots organizations. How do we remedy this through our communication strategies?

### Opportunities:

- Scottsdale Retreat – Results Based Accountability (RBA) system – ON-LINE (look for RBA Scottsdale Retreat)
- Monthly reports from agencies to the commission of the successes of their program as well as reports from the commission to agencies regarding their progress (feed data back to agencies)
- Communication
- Education – training/workshops before RFP stage to help them write their proposals/design their programs with outcomes and evaluation in mind.
- Ask the question: What do we want to learn from this program?
- Ask the question: What message do we want to report in 3-5 years to community? How do we communicate what we are doing and what we are achieving to the community?
- Articulate with education and training.
- State and County Commissions need to be clear about their outcomes and evaluation approach BEFORE those ideas can be clearly articulated to agencies and communities.
- Need to connect with community with passion!
- Learning to be a partner—evaluating commission's progress in acting as a partner.
- Require agencies to devote a substantial percentage (10-15%) of their program budget to hire or pay for evaluation expertise (training, consulting, etc.)

### Action/Next Steps/Recommendations

- State to provide TA for counties.
- More evaluation training within the communities and county.
- Add 15% for evaluation process in grants to be funded by grant.
- Provide baby step workshops for grass root organizations.
- Education to communities and agencies around the usefulness of evaluation for program improvement and sustainability (accessing future funds from other funding sources).

## Building a Network of Prop. 10 Evaluators

### Convener:

*Michael Bates*

[mbates@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:mbates@education.ucsb.edu)

(805) 893-7361

### Participants:

*Alexis Esperza, Kern*

*Pat Wheatley, Santa Barbara*

*Nancy Cook, San Mateo*

*J. Oshi Ruelas, State Commission*

*Deb Coulter, Sutter*

*Tehama County*

*Madera*

*and others*

### Issues:

Is there an Interest?

Overwhelming yes!

### How would it look?

- Listserv (by topics)
- Phone lists
- Workshops (monthly? quarterly?)
- Conference calls and minutes

*General agreement:* Have discussion boards on the Association website and weekly email notification broken down by topic of postings.

Also: Form workgroup (subgroup) of Association's Evaluation Subcommittee

### What role would it play?

- Forming connections
- Technical discussions
- Recommendations
- Pooling resources/sharing
- Build collaboration/capacity across smaller counties
- Inform standards, best practices



- Support system
- Build capacity for evaluation (in counties, state, programs, etc.)

### **Evaluation Subcommittee Workgroup**

- “Evaluators” subgroup
- Two levels:
  - How do local evaluators influence statewide vision?
  - How do local evaluators communicate with each other?
- Need more time to work on “nuts & bolts” of evaluation
- Need a common understanding to work together collegially
- Opportunity to share standard evaluation contract agreements across counties
- Need opportunities to engage at program level, through training, conferences, TA, etc.

## Coordinating Between the State & Local Commissions

### Convener:

Ned Cooney

[nedresource@yahoo.com](mailto:nedresource@yahoo.com)

### Issues:

We covered the History of the efforts to develop state, county, and local indicators thus far.

### Recommendations are:

1. Formulate Evaluators as a Network of Learners, to provide feedback for continuous improvement to all state and county systems.
2. The state must consider two levels of data systems:  
  
MACRO Micro, using large outcome data at the state level, and process data at the local level to recognize the uniqueness of each county.
3. Small counties need assistance with data collection. The menu of options would be most desirable but especially essential for small counties.
4. Longitudinal tracking should be done on a number of measures, but should be a state responsibility.
5. State should identify and visit “what’s working” in counties, and capture and disseminate “promising approaches” or “best practices.” They should also identify what didn’t work without county identification, and try to identify appropriate learning from those programs.

***MOST IMPORTANTLY, the State needs to note the urgency of developing and disseminating simple outcome measures which they want to use, and getting this information to the counties ASAP***

